



# Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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August 13, 2013  
FB13-069

## **NOAA Fisheries is Implementing Actions for Yellowtail Snapper and Shallow-Water Groupers in the South Atlantic**

### *Small Entity Compliance Guide*

NOAA Fisheries is implementing management measures in Regulatory Amendment 15 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region (Regulatory Amendment 15). The final rule published in the *Federal Register* on August 13, 2013, and is effective on September 12, 2013 (78 FR 49183).

### ***Yellowtail Snapper***

The state of Florida completed a population assessment for yellowtail snapper in May 2012. The yellowtail snapper stock is neither overfished (too few fish in the population) nor undergoing overfishing (fish being removed too quickly). The assessment results suggest the yellowtail snapper catch levels can be increased without jeopardizing the health of the population.

This rule increases the commercial and recreational annual catch limit for yellowtail snapper. The total annual catch limit will increase from 2,173,875 to 3,037,500 pounds whole weight. The commercial annual catch limit will increase from 1,142,589 to 1,596,510 pounds whole weight. The recreational annual catch limit will increase from 1,031,286 to 1,440,990 pounds whole weight.

### ***Gag and Shallow-Water Groupers***

In 2009, fishery managers implemented a management measure that closes the commercial sector for gag and all other shallow-water groupers for the remainder of the fishing year when the gag annual catch limit is met or

projected to be met. This final rule will modify this management measure so that only the commercial sector for gag will close when the gag commercial annual catch limit is met or projected to be met.

The measure to close the commercial sector for gag and all other shallow-water groupers when the gag annual catch limit is met or projected to be met was implemented to reduce bycatch of gag. However, new information suggests this measure is not as effective as previously thought, because gag are not closely associated in landings with all of the other shallow-water grouper species. Also, since the measure was put into place in 2009, fishery managers have implemented annual catch limits, and measures to prevent the annual catch limit from being exceeded, for all shallow-water grouper species.

This final rule will also reduce the gag commercial annual catch limit from 353,940 to 326,722 pounds gutted weight to account for projected gag discard mortality from commercial trips that target co-occurring species (i.e., red grouper and scamp) during a gag closure.

This final rule will not change other management measures for shallow-water groupers such as the annual January through April spawning season closure.

More information, including Frequently Asked Questions for Regulatory Amendment 15, may be found online at:

[http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable\\_fisheries/s\\_atl/sg/2013/reg\\_am15/index.html](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/s_atl/sg/2013/reg_am15/index.html)

This bulletin serves as a Small Entity Compliance Guide, complying with section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996.